



# COLLABORATIONS



Jan./Feb. 2000

## The Newsletter for California's Community-Focused Court Planning and Court Community Outreach Initiatives

Vol. 2, Issue 1

**"A new era of collaboration between county courts, the Judicial Council, and California's communities will lead to a renewal of public trust and confidence in the administration of justice and the primacy of the rule of law in California."**  
—Chief Justice Ronald M. George

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### County Spotlight Local Court Plans Reflect Community Priorities and History— Mariposa, Inyo, Yuba

#### MARIPOSA PLANS FOR A FUTURE AS RICH AS ITS PAST

The 1999–2000 court strategic plan submitted by the Superior Court of Mariposa County reflects a commitment to the preservation of a community spirit. Under the leadership of **Hon. Carlos C. LaRoche**, Presiding Judge, and **Michael Berest**, Court Executive Officer, the Mariposa court planning team has tailored a community-focused strategic plan within the framework of five of the Judicial Council's six strategic goals: *Access, Fairness, and Diversity; Independence and Accountability; Modernization; Quality of Justice and Service to the Public;* and, *an Educated Public*. Within each of these overarching goals, the planning team identified goals unique to Mariposa County, including: construction of a justice services center; cost-effective sharing of resources (including cross-county collaboration); collaboration and communication with the general public and justice agencies to ensure greater public understanding of the court; installation and utilization in the

court of the latest technology; establishment of specialty courts; and maintaining a well-organized and legally competent court as measured by public surveys. The planning team took advantage of a Judicial Council community-focused court planning technical assistance grant for fiscal year 1998–1999 to employ court planning consultant **Heidi Kolbe**, whose assistance to the team is ongoing.

As is true of many of the strategic plans submitted, Mariposa's plan includes a wealth of information about the county and its court. From its

#### Superior Court of California, County of Mariposa MISSION STATEMENT

To provide equal justice for all while upholding the laws and Constitution of the land in an impartial, competent, and expeditious manner.

prominence in the gold rush of 1848 to its status as one of the state's original counties (Mariposa covered one-fifth of the state when California entered the Union in 1850), the area figures prominently in state and national history. Designated a historical landmark on the National Register of Historic Places, the Mariposa County Courthouse was constructed in 1854 and is the oldest courthouse in continuous use west of the Rockies.

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[www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/community](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/community)



### INYO: TARGETING THE NEEDS OF A DIVERSE RURAL POPULATION

**Hon. Dean Stout** initially convened the strategic planning team for the Superior Court of Inyo County in January 1998. Since that time the team has grown from 5 members to a 17 member group dedicated to gathering various stakeholder perspectives on court services. This commitment to determining and meeting community needs is well reflected in the strategic plan recently submitted by the court. The planning team identified five key result areas that relate to five of the broad goals of the California Judicial Council. The five areas are: equal access to the court system, modernizing the court system, expanded family support

#### Superior Court of California, County of Inyo MISSION STATEMENT

**To protect the legal and constitutional rights of all; to provide an accessible forum to preside over and resolve disputes under the law; to administer justice in a fair and impartial manner.**

services, education for court staff, and budgeting priorities and funding sources for court services. In order to facilitate the planning team's continuing efforts, the court has applied for additional community-focused court planning grant funds under the Judicial Council's latest technical assistance grant cycle for fiscal year 1999–2000. These funds will be used to retain the services of court planning consultant, **Patricia Tuecke**, for the development of

a court Web site, and for community forums in remote portions of the county, including Furnace Creek, Death Valley, Tecopa, and Shoshone.

The Superior Court of Inyo County's recently submitted plan also includes court and county profiles that provide valuable insights about the court's community. For instance, geographically the county is the second largest in the state and claims the distinction of 92 percent of its land being owned by various federal, state, and municipal agencies. The county's estimated 18,000 residents are spread over 10,192 square miles. County residents include significant Native American (there are four American Indian reservations), Latino, and senior citizen populations. Given such demographics, ensuring equal access to the court system for a widely dispersed, rural population is one of the court's many strategic priorities.

### YUBA: COMMUNITY-RESPONSIVE COURT PLANNING

The planning team for the Superior Court of Yuba County, led by **Hon. Dennis J. Buckley** with the assistance of **Steve Konishi**, Court Executive Officer, has submitted a strategic court plan designed to ensure 21<sup>st</sup>-century quality of justice for the 61,000 residents of Yuba County. The court's comprehensive plan, like Mariposa's, is founded upon five of the Judicial Council's six strategic goals: *Access, Fairness, and Diversity; Independence and Accountability; Modernization; Quality of Justice and service to*

*the Public; and, an Educated Public.* The plan identifies specific objective categories within each issue area. For example, within strategic issue one, *Access, Fairness, and Diversity*, the plan categorizes its major focus as obtaining adequate court facilities. Likewise, for strategic issue two, *Independence and Accountability*, the plan identifies two categories of focus—fostering mutual assistance and partnering, and obtaining adequate funding and staffing. Strategic issue three, *Modernization*, sets infrastructure functions and court program services as the court's primary focus areas. An appendix to the plan reports on the court's extensive stakeholder survey process, including a 1999 juror survey that reveals an impressive customer satisfaction record. Yuba's court planning team has also applied for assistance under the Judicial Council's community-focused court planning technical assistance grant for fiscal year 1999–2000. According to **Steve Konishi**, funds awarded under the grant will be used to retain the

#### Superior Court of California, County of Yuba MISSION STATEMENT

**To provide quality equal justice for all.**

services of court planning consultant **Heidi Kolbe** and to fund community forums. Development of a court Web site will also be a major initiative under the grant.

Like Inyo's plan, Yuba's strategic plan includes a historical overview of the county, which prior to the  
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arrival of the white settlers was the most densely populated Native American region in North America. As with so many California counties, the gold rush of the mid-1800s was a major catalyst in settlement of the area. In fact, Marysville, Yuba's county seat, is named for Mary Murphy Covillaud, a Donner Party survivor.

## **85% OF COUNTY COURTS SUBMIT COURT STRATEGIC PLANS COMMUNITY-FOCUSED COURT PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE SET TO PREPARE JUDICIAL COUNCIL REPORT ON LOCAL COURT PLANNING**

At a meeting held on January 18, 2000, the Community-Focused Court Planning Implementation Committee, co-chaired by **Hon. Judith McConnell** and **Hon. Veronica McBeth** began synthesizing the results of the 49 court plans recently submitted to the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Assisting committee members is a group of AOC Research and Planning analysts who have begun the process by analyzing a preliminary list of issues across county court plans. Preliminary issues have been derived from the policy directions in the Judicial Council's Strategic Plan; however, analysts will identify and add other prominent issues and motifs as they uncover them in the local plans. The goal of the process is to ensure that the council is made aware of possible new policy directions—issues that local

courts have emphasized, as well as the planning processes and emerging trends identified in the plans.

Since many of the plans submitted are founded upon the council's previously articulated strategic goals, one of the advantages of this method is that analysts and the committee can discern the different ways that courts define a given issue. For example, analysis might reveal that among small courts *Access* is defined as physical access to facilities, whereas in larger urban courts it might be an issue of language and cultural barriers.

The committee will use this information to develop its presentation and recommendations for future statewide and local court planning activities at the Judicial Council's March Planning Workshop. A summary of results will be made available to local courts following the planning workshop.

## ***SERRANUS* WEB SITE: LOCAL COURT PLANS ONLINE [http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/ community/](http://serranus.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/community/)**

All local court plans submitted electronically to the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) have been placed on the *Serranus* Web site to facilitate opportunities for courts to learn from each other.

*Serranus* is a private World Wide Web site for California judges and judicial branch employees. *Serranus* provides AOC press releases, information on Judicial Council business, proposed rules and

forms, information on current legislation pertinent to the judicial branch, materials authored by judges, Center for Judicial Education and Research (CJER) and Judicial Administration Institute of California (JAIC) education calendars and catalogs, CJER benchguides, and CJER publication and videotape lists. If you do not have a *Serranus* password, please contact Sandra Coleman at the AOC to request an application: 415.865.7480 or [sandra.coleman@jud.ca.gov](mailto:sandra.coleman@jud.ca.gov).

Courts whose strategic plans are not currently posted on *Serranus* can add their plan by mailing or e-mailing an electronic copy (MS Word or PDF files; disks must be in IBM format) to Jack Urquhart at the AOC: [jack.urquhart@jud.ca.gov](mailto:jack.urquhart@jud.ca.gov).

The court community is invited to review the local court plans posted on *Serranus* and to provide us with feedback on how we can encourage

## **Technical Assistance Grants for Community- Focused Court Planning Facilitate Local Court Plans**

Grant funds distributed in April 1999 under a Judicial Council technical assistance grant for community-focused court planning (in fiscal year 1998–1999) appear to have played a leading role in helping local courts prepare their strategic plans. Forty courts—some of them engaged in collaborative arrangements—received funds under the grant for hiring a court planning consultant.

According to feedback received from planning team

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leaders and court executive officers, this assistance was instrumental in planning success. For example, **Michael Berest**, Court Executive Officer, Superior Court of Mariposa County, says of his court's consultant, **Heidi Kolbe**, "Ms Kolbe did an outstanding job in facilitating the strategic planning meetings, formulating the documents, and working with me ... to fine-tune the final draft." **Todd Barton**, Court Executive Officer, Kings County Consolidated Courts, reports a similar experience. Says Mr. Barton, whose court hired **Dan Straub & Associates**, "We are extremely pleased with the invaluable assistance Dan Straub & Associates provided during this project." The fine work of several other planning consultants was noted by other

courts.

The application process for the latest round of court planning technical assistance grants closed in January 2000 with approximately 40 courts submitting requests. Funds awarded under the grant can be used for a variety of purposes specifically tied to the court's development of a strategic plan. The grants, which will be administered under the auspices of the Community-Focused Court Planning Implementation Committee, will be awarded by late February 2000.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE  
GRANT PROJECT  
EVALUATION REPORTS FOR  
FY 1998-1999 NOW DUE**

**Counties who received funds in  
April 1999 under the fiscal year  
1998-1999 Judicial Council**

**Technical Assistance Grant for community-focused court planning should submit a project evaluation report at their earliest convenience. Contact Shelley Stump at the AOC for additional information:  
shelley.stump@jud.ca.gov  
415.865.7453.**



New AOC Research and Planning Logo.

**Contributions for *Collaborations*?  
Contact Jack Urquhart  
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The Newsletter for  
California's Community-Focused  
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Initiatives

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**85% of CA Courts Submit Strategic Plans**